1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

ascertained by extended inquiry). Kolusio also remembered "giving his language" (a bold if not sacrilegious act, according to his view) to two or three other persons, (one "not a Mexicano" though speaking Spanish, none "Americano"[1]); but the first-mentioned instance was the one most deeply impressed on his mind. At this time (1800) he retained a working knowledge of the Seri tongue, and was able to serve satisfactorily as a Spanish-Seri interpreter; yet careful test showed that he had forgotten numerous native terms, and sometimes inadvertently substituted other Indian (Yaqui, Papago, and probably Opata) and Spanish words; while he knew so little of the tribal customs and beliefs that inquiries pertaining to them were too nearly fruitless to be long pursued. Undoubtedly his knowledge of the Seri tongue was fresher and fuller in 1832; but since he was practically isolated from his tribe in early childhood, he probably never possessed much information concerning the esoteric characters of his people.

The next noteworthy scientific student of the Seri was Johann Carl Eduard Buschmann, who visited various Mexican tribes, but whose knowledge of the Seri was wholly secondhand. Quoting Villa-Señor and Arrecivita and other early writers, noting unfortunate passages from Bartlett, and magnifying Mühlenpfordt's misapprehensions into positive error, he reduced knowledge of this and neighboring tribes to chaos. The "Guaymas" were separated from the "Seris (oder Seres)", and these (at least by implication) from the "Tiburones", while the "Piatos" were combined with the Seri, the traditional alliance with the Apache was greatly overdrawn, and the "Heri oder Ileris" and the "Tepocas" were treated as distinct.[2] No new facts were adduced, no use was made of local sources of information, and no notice was taken of other than literary data.

In 1857 the gigantic surveying enterprise of Jecker & Co. was undertaken, under a concession from the Government of Mexico, and the scientific surveys were intrusted to a commission headed by El Capitan Carlos Stone (General Charles Pomeroy Stone, U.S.A.). The commission headquartered at Guaymas, purchased vessels for the survey of the coast, and began operations also in the interior; Bahia Pinacati and George island (named by Hardy in 1826) were surveyed, as well as the entire Sonoran coast south of Guaymas, and "one hundred miles of coast near Tiburon", besides many hundred square miles of valuable lands. At this stage friction developed between the progressive commission and the conservative Sonorenses, which ended in the expulsion of the scientific commission by the State government.[3] By reason of the

[1] At the time of inquiry the importance of the other vocabularies was not suspected, and the interpreter was not pushed far enough to permit identification of the persons to whom they were given.

[2] Die Spuren der aztekischen Sprache im nördlichen Mexico und höheren amerikanischen Norden. Zugleich eine Musterung der Völker und Sprachen des nördlichen Mexico und der Westseite Nordamerika von Guadalajara an bis zum Hassee. Von Joh. Carl Ed. Buschmann (in Abhandlungen der Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, aus dem Jahre 1854, zweiter Supplement-Band); Berlin, 1856, pp. 216–221 and elsewhere.

[3] Arizona and Sonora, etc., by Sylvester Mowry; New York, 1864 pp. 98–102.

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648 owner of several ranches adjacent to, and one within, the territory claimed by the
[115] Seri Indians; also by Señor A. Alvomar-Leon of Hermosillo, a young Mexican gentleman educated in the United States. For Señor Encinas the Seri Indians have the highest regard, and his kindly motive in accompanying the party was to facilitate friendly intercourse with the Indians; Señor Alvomar-Leon acted as Spanish-English interpreter, and one of the tribe who speaks Spanish [Mash'm] acted as the Seri interpreter.

One of the subjects of inquiry of the Indians related to the alleged killing of two Americans by the Seri Indians on Tiburon island during last spring at a date not definitely known either to the Indians or to myself. At first the Indians were indisposed to convey information on the subject, but after receiving presents from
[123] Señor Encinas and myself, and friendly assurances from the former, the interpreter for the tribe confessed the crime and detailed the circumstances, denying, however, that any of the Indians present at the place of conference (Rancho de San Francisco de Costa Rica, 17 leagues west-southwest of Hermosillo and near the coast) participated.

According to the first account given through the Indian interpreter, the Indians on the island saw a small vessel approach the shores of the island, and saw four men land therefrom in a small boat. The spokesman among the strangers made inquiry, chiefly by signs, as to whether game was abundant in the interior of the island, and was by signs answered in the affirmative by the chief of the tribe, who displayed a letter of authority from the state officials at Hermosillo. Then the strangers divided, two remaining on the shore by the small boat, while the spokesman and another, accompanied by several Indians, started toward the interior of the island. When they were some distance away—the account continues—some of the Indians remaining on shore indicated by signs a desire to borrow the rifle of one of the two men on the beach, and after some parley the rifle was turned over to them; then the Indians desired also to borrow the small boat in which the party of white men had landed, and after one of the two men remaining on the shore was put aboard the vessel, this, too, was placed in the hands of the Indians. Thereupon several of the Indians entered the small boat, carrying the white man's rifle, and rowed around a headland a short distance away. Passing this point they landed and a part of them ran quickly into the interior in such direction as to intercept the course of the white men. There they lay in wait until the strangers appeared, when they shot the spokesman, killing him almost instantly. On this the second white man cried out for help, whereupon he too was shot and wounded, and then (according to the first account) ran away and concealed himself in the bushes and was seen no more. The Indians who had borrowed the boat then went back to the shore, and reentered the boat with the intention of returning and capturing the fine vessel of the strangers; but as they approached the vessel, being at the time quite near the shore, the man on board arose suddenly with a gun pointed toward them and shouted, whereupon they dropped the borrowed gun and, leaping from the boat, ran away among the mesquite bushes, all escaping unhurt. The white man on the beach then, as the account ran, leaped into the boat, and, recovering his gun, rowed to the vessel and got aboard, when the two men at once made sail and escaped down the bay.

The foregoing account was given to Señor Encinas alone by the Indians through
124 their interpreter, and was afterward conveyed to me through Señor Alvomar-Leon.
648 Both of us recognized the incongruity with the character of the Seri Indians of that part of the narrative relating to the wounding and escape of the second man, and Señors Encinas and Leon and myself sought to impress the improbability of the account on the interpreter. Subsequently the Indians, through their interpreter, conveyed to Señor Encinas a modification of the account (after adhering to the first version for twenty-four hours), which agreed in all essential respects with the first, excepting the supplementary statement that some of the Indians (but neither the party who accompanied the white men nor those who followed in the boat) ran after the wounded man, caught him, shot him again—whereupon he again cried out—and

h McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

them killed him with stones. This modified account, also, Señor Encinas duly conveyed to me. 124

Still later, in collecting linguistic material through the Seri interpreter with the assistance of Señor Alvarez-Lara, I reverted to the subject incidentally (or at least ostensibly so) on two or three occasions, partly with the view of verifying or disproving the current report that the men were eaten by the Indians; and since the first distrust on the part of the interpreter and the companions (by whom he was commonly surrounded) had worn off, the questions were answered freely and with apparent truth. In brief, the information gained in this way was a repetition in general terms of the statement of the killing of both men; but the responses individual (1) that the Indians are not cannibals, (2) that they do not eat any portion or portions of the body of an enemy slain in war, (3) that they do not eat human flesh in a sacrificial way, and (4), specifically, that they did not eat the flesh of the two white men killed last spring. I am disposed to give credence to all of these statements. 648 [266]

Señor Encinas informed me that for a long time after the reputed killing of the two Americans on the island the Seri were exceptionally shy and were seldom seen on the mainland; that the first representatives of the tribe to appear were one or two old women who came to his rancho with much trepidation; that these representatives being not ill-treated, a man appeared, who was also well treated, and that still later other members of the tribe appeared, though it was only a few days before our visit that any considerable body of the Seri Indians showed themselves at their favorite mainland haunt on his rancho. It was his first communication with the Indians since the killing, and, both he and they agreed, the first confession of the crime outside of their own tribe. 648

While in Sonora various conflicting accounts of the affair were given me. One, to which I was disposed to attach credence by reason of the character of my informant and his explanation of the circumstances under which the information was gained, was given me (just before the visit referred to above) by ex-Consul Forbes, of Guaymas. This account corresponds in all essential details with that conveyed to my party by the Indians, except that, according to Mr Forbes' account, the survivors were altogether unarmed after the borrowing of the rifle by the Indians, and that when the man in the boat arose suddenly and shouted he pointed at the Indians not a gun but a stick, in the hope of deceiving them thereby, as he was fortunate enough to do. 115 124 648

It may be added that the Seri Indians are at the same time the most primitive and the most bloodthirsty and treacherous of the Indians of North America, so far as my knowledge extends; also that their character is well known throughout Sonora, and indeed generally throughout Mexico, Arizona, and the southern part of California. I was assured by the acting governor of Sonora and by the prefect of Hermosillo that it would be little short of suicide for even a Mexican official to visit these Indians or land on their island without an armed guard. Through conference with the Indians, also, I learned that any white man, Mexican, or Indian of another tribe coming in contact with them is killed without the slightest compunction, unless they are restrained by fear. Accordingly I am satisfied that the character of the Seri Indians is quite as bad as the unsavory reputation they have acquired throughout the Southwest. 181 648

It should be observed that while the Indians were unable to give the names of the men killed, their description of men and vessel agreed exactly with those of the newspaper correspondent Robinson and his companion, and with the sloop *Examiner*; and Mr Forbes' information was obtained direct from the survivors of the expedition of which Mr Robinson had charge. There can thus be no doubt that it was Mr Robinson and his companion who were killed by these Indians, and whose killing was confessed by them, as set forth above. 124 648

With great respect, your obedient servant,

W J McGee,
Ethnologist in charge.

Honorable S. P. Langley,
Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.

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On first learning of the incident, months before the diplomatic correspondence began, the state and federal authorities promptly adopted vigorous punitive measures. A vessel carrying a force of federal troops was dispatched from Guaymas and a body of state troops were sent from Hermosillo with instructions to meet on the coast and capture the criminals at any cost, even to the extermination of the tribe if resistance was offered. But like so many others, the expedition failed; the horses of the land party were stalled in the sands and burrow-riddled plains, the vessel was harassed by storms and tidal currents, and the landing boats were swamped by the surf, while the Indians merely fled at sight of the invaders toward inaccessible lairs or remote parts of their territory; and when the water was gone and men and animals were at point of famishing, the forces retired without so much as seeing a single Seri.

During the ensuing autumn the tribe, having quenched their blood-feud in alien blood, turned toward peace, and sent a matron of the Turtle clan, known as Juana Maria, to Costa Rica—i. e., Rancho de San Francisco de Costa Rica—where she was gradually followed by younger matrons and children, then by youths, and finally by warriors (after the fashion of Seri diplomacy) to the aggregate number of about sixty. Here they were found by the first expedition of the Bureau of American Ethnology, in November, 1894; and here, under the still strong influence of the venerable Don Pascual, supplemented by small gifts and persistent pressure, they gradually "gave their language", submitted to extensive photographing, confessed specifically to the Robinson killing, and yielded up nearly the whole of their portable possessions in the way of domestic implements and utensils, face-painting material, pelican-skin robes, snake-skin necklaces, etc.

With the return of the Bureau party to Hermosillo the Indians became restive and soon withdrew beyond the desert. In the course of the ensuing winter a group returned to the neighborhood of Costa Rica, where, by aid of strategy, seven warriors (including some of those seen at the rancho in the preceding November) with the families of four, were arrested, taken to Hermosillo, tried, and, according to oral accounts, banished. Irritated by this action, and connecting with it the visit of Don Pascual and the strangers desiring their language and sacred things, the clans resumed the warpath, displaying special animosity toward the residents of Costa Rica. There were a few minor skirmishes; then, at the instance of the state officials, a number of Papago Indians, who are feared by the Seri beyond all other enemies, were domiciled at the rancho, where their mere presence proved a sufficient protection. Meantime, according to apparently trustworthy press accounts, two small exploring parties entered Seriland; the first consisted of seven prospectors, who kept well together until about to leave the territory, when one of their number fell behind—and his companions saw him no more, though they carefully retraced their trail beyond the

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

lowed it, yelling and swinging his light lasso, until, after much doubling and dodging and many unsuccessful casts, he caught and dragged the howling beast back to the open; and it was only after half a dozen repetitions that enough dogs had escaped to spoil the sport. As the boys lounged chattering back toward the rancheria their course lay between two clumps of the usual desert shrubbery, so placed that when the first was obliquely left and 40 or 50 feet distant from them, the other was obliquely right and 100 feet away. At this point a bevy of small birds (perhaps blackbirds—at any rate corresponding to blackbirds in size and flight) fluttered suddenly out of the nearer clump toward the more distant one, when, too instantaneously for the untrained eye to catch exchange of signal or beginning of movement, the boys lunged forward in a common effort to seize the birds; and though none were entirely successful, one exultantly displayed a tuft of feathers clutched by his fingers as the bird darted into and through the thorny harbor. When the distances were paced it was found that, although the birds had the advantage of the start, the boys covered at least 90 per cent of their distance in the same time; while the spontaneity of the impulse demonstrated habitual chase of flying game under fit conditions.

While obtaining the Seri vocabulary with Mashém's aid, advantage was taken of every opportunity to secure collateral information concerning the actual use of the terms, and thereby of gaining insight into the tribal habits. Through his naive explanations, usually repeated and corroborated by the elderwoman of the Turtle clan (Juana María) and others of the tribe, it was learned that half-grown Seri boys are fond of hunting hares (jack-rabbits); that they usually go out for this purpose in threes or fours; that when a hare is started they scatter, one following it slowly while the others set off obliquely in such manner as to head it off and keep it in a zigzag or doubling course until it tires; and that they then close in and take the animal in their hands, frequently bringing it in alive to show that it was fairly caught—for it is deemed discreditable, if not actually wrong, to take game animals without giving them opportunity for escape or defense by exercise of their natural powers. Similarly, Mashém described the chase of the bura and other deer as ordinarily conducted by five persons (of whom one or two may be youths), who scatter at sight of the quarry, gradually surround it, bewilder it by confronting it at all points, and finally close in either to seize it with their hands, or perhaps to brain it with a stone or short club; the former being held the proper way and the latter a partial failure. This hunting custom, described as a commonplace by Mashém, is established by the vaqueros who had frequently witnessed it from a distance; and the same extra-tribal observers described still more striking feats of individual Seri hunters: Don Manuel, son of Señor Encinas, and Don Ygnacio Lozania were endeavoring to train to work a robust Seri (one of a band sojourning temporarily at Costa

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

bolic weapon, the counterfeit cartridge, the imitation machete, or other charm against alien power; it is usually he who wears the white man's hat or random garment in lieu of the deer or lion mask of earlier days; and during recent years his most-prized fetish, and one which practically insures the support of his fellows, is a written certificate of his chiefship from Señor Encinas, or, still better, from El Gobernador at Hermosillo. Yet he is a throneless and even homeless potentate, sojourning, like the rest of his fellows, in such jacales as his two or three or four wives may erect, wandering with season and sisterly whim, chased often by rumors of invasion or by fearsome dreams, and restrained by convention even from chiding his own children in his wives' jacales save through the intercession of female relatives.

In 1894 the head chief was reported to be on Tiburon; the putative chief of the rancheria at Costa Rica was the taciturn giant known as El Mudo (plate XIX); while Mashem (or Juan Esturga) was the head of one of the Pelican clans.

ADOPTION

One of the more important factors in demotic development among primitive peoples (probably second only to interclan marriage in extending sympathy and unifying law) is adoption; and special efforts were made to obtain data relating to the subject. Direct inquiries were futile, the responses indicating that the entire subject is foreign to the thought of the tribe; but three sporadic and measurably incongruous examples of quasi adoption are worthy of record.

The most specific case is that of Lieutenant Hardy, who visited Isla Tiburon in 1826, and was fortunate in gaining the confidence of the tribe through successful medical treatment of the wife of the chief. On his second landing he was greeted with many expressions of gratitude, which were especially exuberant on the part of the daughter of the family (always a personage in Seri custom), who insisted on painting his face. He specifies:

> Not wishing to deny her the indulgence of this innocent frolic, I quietly suffered her to proceed. She mixed up part of a cake of blue color, which resembles ultramarine (and of which I have a specimen), in a small shell; in another, a white color, obtained by ground talc, and in a third was mixed a color obtained from the red flint-stone of the class which I before stated was to be found on Seal Island, and resembled cinnabar. With the assistance of a pointed stick the tender artist formed perpendicular narrow stripes down my cheeks and nose, at such distances apart as to admit of an equally narrow white line between them. With equal delicacy and skill the tops and bottoms of the white lines were finished off with a white spot. If the cartilage of my nose at the nostrils had been perforated so as to admit a small, round, white bone, five inches in length, tapering off at both ends and rigged something like a cross-jack yard, I might have been mistaken for a native of the island. As soon as the operation was finished, the whole party set up a roar of merry laughter, and called me "Hermano, Capitan Tiburon," being the very limited extent of their knowledge of Spanish.[1]

[1] Travels, p. 288.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

597 While the lieutenant attached no significance to the painting, the
648 procedure would seem to have been a ceremonial adoption, such as might, for example, be used in connection with a confederate clan. The description of the painting is sufficiently explicit to identify the totem with that of the Turtle clan, represented by the clanmother and the daughter of the clan at Costa Rica in 1894 (plates XVIII and XXIV); but it is noteworthy that the salutation with which the ceremony terminated, and which may be rendered "Captain-Brother of the Sharks", would seem to identify the totem with the shark rather than the turtle.[1]

The second case of adoption (if so it may be styled) was that of Señor Encinas, after his bloodiest battle, in which nearly all of the Seri warriors were left on the field. In this case there was no ceremony, or at least none remembered by the beneficiary; he was merely informed by a delegation of aged dames that thenceforth he would be regarded as a stronger and more invulnerable chief (shaman) than any member of the tribe, and hence as the tribal leader.

The third instance is still less definite, though it seems to be trust-
173 worthy. There is a widespread tradition throughout Sonora that in
563 the course of a brush between a band of Papago hunters and a marauding bunch of Seri warriors in the mountains southeast of Cieneguilla
727 twenty-five or thirty years ago, a Papago maiden was captured and carried off to Tiburon; and that for some years thereafter—i. e., until the Papago had taken ample blood-vengeance—the intertribal animosity was exceptionally bitter. No wholly satisfactory basis for the traditions could be found among the Papago, though some of the silences of the old men were suggestive; nor was the tradition fully credited by Señor Encinas, despite its deep lodgment in the minds of some of his yoemanry. When Mashém was interrogated on different occasions, he merely shook his head in stolid silence; but when the device was adopted of inquiring the number of Papago children brought into the tribe through this woman he responded promptly with a snort of scorn, and followed this with the explanation that she never had children, and could not because she was an alien slave. The explanation was corroborated by clanmother Juana María and other matrons, with sundry expressions of contemptuous disapproval of the inquiry and scorn of the very idea that aliens could fructify within the tribe. Later, the ice being broken, Mashém intimated that the woman had recently died of old age and its consequences—doubtless as an outcast. On the whole, the direct testimony would seem to substantiate the tradition, and to supplement it with the short and simple annals of a spouseless and childless life (incredible of other tribes, but consistent

[124] [773] [1] This identification may possibly be correct, the collocation of the totem with the turtle was shaped through unwilling and perhaps misleading responses made by Mashém to inquiries in 1894—these responses denoting a sea monster which in the beginning helped the Ancient of Pelikano to make the world by pushing from below, and which is now very good food—a description apparently fitting the turtle more closely than the other animal.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

the character of the man; in very fact, it at the same time both measures and makes the character of the woman. Among other privileges bestowed on the bride during the probationary period are those of receiving the most intimate attentions from the clanfellows of the groom; and these are noteworthy as suggestions of a vestigial polyandry or adelphogamy. At the close of the year the probation ends in a feast provided by the probationer, who thereupon enters the bride's jacal as a perpetual guest of unlimited personal privileges (subject to tribal custom); while the bride passes from a half-wanton heyday into the duller routine of matronly existence.

These details were elicited at Costa Rica in 1894 through methodical inquiries made in connection with the linguistic collection. This collection was made with the cooperation of Señor Alvemar Leon as Spanish-English interpreter, together with Mashém and (commonly) the clanmother known as Juana Maria. Usually quite a group of Seri matrons with two or three warriors were gathered about, and to these Mashém frequently appealed for advice and verification, while they constantly expressed approval or disapproval of questions and replies, as gathered through Mashém's words and mien, in such manner as to afford a fair index of their habitual thought—e. g., when the Seri vernacular for "twins" was obtained and the inquiry was extended (by normal association of ideas) to the term for "triplets", Mashém collapsed into moody silence while the rest of the group decamped incontinently with horror-stricken countenances—thereby suggesting cautious subsequent inquiry, and the discovery that triplets are deemed evil monsters and their production a capital crime. It was in one of the earlier conferences that the first intimations concerning the unusual marital customs were incidentally brought out; the Caucasian interpreter and bystanders were diverted by the naive reference to the moral test, but their expressions were hastily checked lest the native informants might be startled and rendered secretive; then, during two later conferences, when Mashém and several matrons were freely participating in the proceedings, the line of inquiry was so turned as to touch on various aspects of the marriage custom and bring out all essential features; so that much confidence is reposed in the accuracy of the details.[1] The confidence in the verity of the customs was such as not to be impaired seriously by the fact that no records of coincident moral tests were known in the voluminous literature of marriage and its concomitants; nor was it shaken by the still weightier fact that none of the experienced ethnologists to whom inquiries were addressed during ensuing months were acquainted with parallel customs—indeed the only shadow of corroboration thus obtained came in the form of references to the widespread requirement of continence in war and ceremonies,

[1] It may be observed that Kolonia, when visited in January, 1900, failed to corroborate the descriptions of Mashém and the matrons; but his failure occasioned little surprise for the reason that he has not lived with his tribe since early boyhood, and is equally uninformed (or uncommunicative) concerning the myths, ceremonies, and even the totems of the tribe.

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930) 1931 NU31 Seri NU31

NEW DATA

Informants' Attitude

Most of my information was obtained from Chico Romero, the present official chief, a man of about 38. Santo Blanco and one or two other men contributed occasionally. Sr. Thomson was present most of the time and aided materially, both in encouraging the Seri and in helping to formulate questions suitably to their experience and comprehension. For instance, he repeatedly cleared up points in the kinship system by applying his knowledge of the actual relationship of Seri individuals, or their acquaintance with his relatives, to frame concrete cases, real or hypothetical, for which a denomination was then readily given. Without this aid, the system could not have been obtained with either reasonable surety or correctness. So far as possible, direct questions were replaced by giving to the Seri accounts of customs attributed to the Cocopa, of whose existence they know, and suggesting comparisons, in which they proved interested. On the whole, their attitude was friendly, coöperative, and appeared unsecretive. Concealment may be so automatic a habit with them that they practice it without giving a sign; but I had the constant impression that they told little about their religion because they knew little, and not from any skilfully concealed reluctance. Still, all negative statements must be regarded as only tentative when secured in a brief time through an imperfect medium of communication from informants not accustomed to mental exertion.

Historical Tradition

There were formerly four tribes, according to the informant: to the East, the Seris, at Pueblo de los Seris (the ex-mission, across the river from Hermosillo); to the West, the Tiburones, on the island; to the North, at Tepoca, the Xeka'aikŏ'ye; to the South, at Tastiota, the Antepkĕ'ituX or Tastioteños. Too many died at Pueblo Seris, so they joined the Tiburones. They fought the northern and southern groups. Sixty (or 68) Seri-Tiburones once went to Tepoca to kill a man and his two sons. They made marks and stuck a knife in the trail to cause them to stop. Then they shot them. The women and children were captured, taken to the island and kept, the women first being abused by the whole party. The informant's son José Manuel (13) had a Tepoca maternal grandmother; that is, the informant, now about 38, married the daughter of a Tepoca woman. (This would put the incident hardly earlier than 1860 or later than 1890.) Similarly, there is Tastioteño blood among the present Seri. The dialects of the several tribes are said to have been distinct, though allied.

It is evident that these memories cover only the last part of the period of Spanish contacts.

8: Ascher E-5 (1960) 1962 NU31 Seri NU31

225 In fishing for turtle, one man stands at the bow of the boat, holding the mainshaft and extension cord in one hand. When he sights a turtle, he propels the mainshaft at the animal's carapace, retaining a firm grip on the mainshaft and the extension cord. If it is struck, the turtle lurches away, loosening the foreshaft and unplugging it from the mainshaft. Tired eventually by the tension [411] applied by the fisherman on the extension cord, the turtle is finally stunned by a wooden club and lifted into the boat.

225 There is evidence that the turtle-fishing complex has consider-175 able time depth and stability. The Seri were using similar apparatus and methods at least as early as 1825 (Hardy 1829: 296-297). At [501] this time they employed balsa boats rather than wooden boats with outboard motors and torches of cactus fibers instead of kerosene lamps. The complex continued, apparently with little change, through 1896 (McGee 1898: 187-193). Wooden boats and kerosene [177] lamps began to be adopted during the 1920s, and outboard motors were introduced in the 1940s.

411 During the entire period of 135 years (1825-1960), however, the harpoon tackle underwent only one important innovation. The 225 gasket on the foreshaft was introduced by a Seri Indian about the 176 year 1935. The addition of the gasket was related to, and coincided [439] in time with, the first attempts of the Seri to supply turtles to the commercial market. When they caught turtles solely for their own use, they did not need to keep the animals alive for very long, but when they began to sell them it became important to preserve them alive until they reached the market. The gasket acts like the hilt on a sword, preventing the entrance of the foreshaft hafting into the turtle's body. Through its contact with the carapace, it restricts the rotation of the point within the animal's body and provides a seal which inhibits the loss of blood, and thus prevents early death. After the turtle is stunned with a club and lifted into the boat, the foreshaft is removed and the hole which it made is stuffed with a piece of cloth.

● 124 Seri men were shown a harpoon foreshaft from a museum archive 411 and asked what it was for and whether they themselves made similar ones. If an informant acknowledged that he made them, he was asked, at the minimum, to detail the materials he used, the procedures he followed, and the approximate amount of time it would take him to produce one. Later he was requested to show the field worker examples of the foreshafts he had made. Of the approximately 40 adult Seri males, about 25 were available for questioning. Of these, approximately ten did not make foreshafts or had made them in the past but did so no longer; they were mainly older men and those [474] engaged in the administration of the Sociedad Cooperative de Pro-[887] duccion Pesquera Seri. Five men either would not or could not volunteer information. Data were obtained from the remaining ten adult men and from one eight-year-old boy; they include 21 foreshafts made by these eleven people.

411 The materials from which a foreshaft can be shaped and as-325 sembled vary within what is available in the Seri environment. Iron

9:Malkin F-5 (1953-1955)1962 NU31 Seri NU31

121 documentary data and second, also the archaeological data. The subject matter unfortunately [172] is absent from the first. As for the archaeological data, there is none as yet to date for the area [114] except Giffor's unpublished manuscript. Nor have we the kind of ethnography that would be of help—not until ethnographers will pay greater attention to the naturalistic knowledge of the people. Nor can the matter of the Seris' cultural connections be undertaken with the present material with any degree of reliability, simply because no such material exists for the neighboring group.

However, few suggestions outside the limitations and the main object of the present analysis can be made. From the fragmentary data available I shall try to show the change in utilization of animals by the Seris. I think I can also indicate a few points in support or denial of this or that idea of the Seris' cultural connections. I can also suggest the direction of the attitudes toward animals in the Seri culture, in a sphere which normally we assign variously within the domain of religion or world view. I can also indicate some of the major changes in the Seris' exploitation of general environment. All these can be suggested only fragmentarily, as only small bricks toward a generalized structure of our knowledge of the Seri culture. To this extent the present analysis should be helpful to the future student of the Seri culture and to our general understanding of it.

Procedure

114 The field work on which this material is based has been done during the summer of 1953, June-September and again for one week in May, 1955. [164] The second visit took place at a most inopportune [166] time, amidst bad measles, dysentery and a flu epidemic which completely disorganized the tribe and persuaded most of them to flee Desemboque into the coastal desert.

The work was accomplished mostly in Desemboque, the Seris' largest and most permanent settlement after 1940 where most of them lived. Occasional side trips were undertaken later to Hermosillo, Estero Sargente, Campo Vivora, Tiburon and some of the other places mostly with the view of evaluating their ecological nature and for the observation and acquisition of the zoological materials not available in Desemboque. These trips had been undertaken in the company of the Seris who then also doubled up as informants.

● 124 During the first two weeks of my stay in Des- [126] emboque, I did no interviewing but concentrated on the collections of zoological material, occasionally and informally asking for the name of this or that animal. After two weeks regular interviewing work was commenced, first with an aid of Mr. Leo Sandoval, Mexican, U.S.—educated school teacher, but later on entirely without an interpreter. There are sound reasons for this practice. Direct questioning allows the interrogator to evaluate the replies in their less obvious nuances, the reactions of the informant to the question, his hesitations, uncertainties and the like.

In the event of well-known animals with those colloquial Spanish name everybody, Mexican and

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● 124 Seri alike, is acquainted (Cougar, Jaguar, Whale, etc.) questioning had been done by referring to such and such beast without the use of pictures or actual specimens. This procedure had been followed for the majority of mammals, which are well enough known in the area. But otherwise, questioning had been done with actual specimens in hand, alive where possible. This was owing to [825] the fact that response may be different to the dead specimens than to the live ones and grew out of a conviction (entirely substantiated in the course of work) that many animals, of a small variety especially, are recognized more by their distinctive behaviour pattern, flight, selection of habitat, voice, running posture, etc., than by the shape and form alone. All invertebrates, all reptiles and all but the best known and largest fish had produced the data from actual specimens, dead or alive. Finally, where neither common colloquial name nor specimens were available, I resorted to pictures. That way I obtained data for a small number of animals and for a good many birds. This method has its weakness. The line drawings in the excellent guide to the *Birds of Mexico* by Blake I used are somewhat on the "dead" side and may be good aid in bird identification to someone who also will read the text, but they often fail to be of much use to someone who rarely has seen the drawings in any book, let alone a bird guide. From the replies it was obvious that a certain amount of misidentification took place in the naming of the birds or mammals from the sketches. I took account of this and eliminated from consideration all those forms where misidentification on the part of the informant was obvious. This in itself may be a worthwhile object of study but it was not my concern at the moment.

In working with the informants I studiously avoided giving them any suggestion that I already knew what the animal was or that I had a fair idea about the general features of its natural history. This is especially important in considering the Seris' knowledge of the animal distribution, ecology and other salient features. When available, I often brought along specimens of species I knew did not occur in Desemboque which had been captured elsewhere, in the absence of the Seris. This was in order to test better their recognition of animal forms.

115 Altogether 10 informants had been used. Of these the bulk were questioned in 1963, some again in 1955 and that year Chico Romero, now an old man of over 70, had been also added to the roster. Chico was Kroeber's star informant in 1930 and from him came the bulk of Kroeber's original information.

The two main informants were Miguel Barnett, then aged about 45 and one of the Seris' best hunters, and Jose Juan Moreno, a fellow about 25, recognized as their best fisherman. As expected, their preoccupations and interests slanted their replies. Accordingly, Jose Juan had the best knowledge of the marine animals and Miguel of the terrestrial animals. Jose Juan aided me again with some information in 1955.

[165] Other informants were as follows: Juan Torres, aged 40 or so; Ramon Montayo, one of the

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115 oldest Seris then alive of over 70; Ramon Cor-
[165] rales, claiming to be 37 and on the dim-witted side; Jesus Montanyo, a quiet, cooperative man of 21; Natcheo Molina, aged 35 or so, whose interest in the protestant hymnals was unfortunately far greater than in giving me the information I wanted; Jose Manuel Romero, about 37 years old on his own claim; and Jose Barnett, Miguel's son,
825 aged 14. Inclusion of young Barnett was a lucky strike because it indicated clearly differences in the natural history knowledge between the older men and the young men, later confirmed also in the incidental questioning of several young boys.
[868] Young men start out with general interest in animals of all sorts, including the small invertebrates, but as they grow up they end up with solid knowledge of economically important species and slim, forgotten knowledge of the insignficant invertebrates.

● 124 I made an endeavor to obtain the same sort of information from several informants in order to eliminate as far as possible aberrant answers or peculiarities. The most solid information is available for the mammals, which are, of course, well-known. Here in some cases the same kind of information had been obtained from five individuals. In other instances only two to three were available and sometimes only one. What was surprising about the information given were not the differences, which I often indicated in the text, but the amount if identical agreement on almost every single item of data between different individuals.

Since it was imposaible to obtain information on all animals from the same individuals, the questioning proceeded in "blocks." By this I mean, I would question for example two individuals about the entire order of mammals (every species of them) and another two on the birds. Two other individuals then would be questioned on half of the birds and half of the mammals, while the other two on half of the reptiles and half of the fishes; still another two on half of the insects and half of the marine invertebrates, while others would yet cover all of the insects or reptiles or fishes independently. This I believe is a useful procedure. It allows to test generalized concepts of natural history for several individuals for diverse groups. It is motivated by the question of no little importance. What does so-and-so know about mammals and what does he know about birds? What are his generalized ideas of each group? It
[825] had been soon discovered that when it concerns special points, the informants were apt to have standardized notions of what the animals did, regardless of the actual situation. The less actual observational knowledge they actually had, the more frequent were pat replies. Obvious demonstration of this helped a great deal to eliminate such pat answers or to recognize them for what they were and to account for them in the final analysis.

000 Another point in the procedure is of par-
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III

MAMMALS

262 water for a week until it escaped. There was
[231] no intent to do away with it and serve it up for dinner later on.

The 3 species reported as eaten in the past are kangaroo rat, sea lion and the ringtail cat or cácomistle. Of these the little rodent had been
[252] supposedly "boiled in hot water with salt" which
[261] method of preparation may indicate that it happens quite recently yet. It is quite possible that in times of famine this animal is still used. The sea
[432] lion has been reported as "eaten once a long time ago. All of it. But not now. Its hide was once sold
[114] also but now it isn't used at all." This conflicts with McGee's statement (McGee, 189:202) that there was a taboo on eating sea lions among the Seris and there is no way to reconcile the information.

[114] McGee's report may be as truthful as are the uncertain and hazy comments of the present day Indians.

224 On the other hand, the cougar belongs to a very dubious category, unless we can rely on Miguel Barnett's memory. All 4 of the younger informants emphatically deny that the cougar has ever been hunted for meat. But Miguel Barnett claimed that this has been done in the past, although he could not tell how long ago. Kroeber says nothing about this animal and this makes it difficult to date the events. At the time of Kroeber's visit, Miguel was at least 25 years old and the cougar could have been hunted either
[262] then or earlier. But today the Seris do not eat the flesh of the big cat and their abhorrence of it has been confirmed by the Mexicans to whom I talked about the subject, and who relish cougars' meat. This apparent distaste for the *el tigre's* flesh may
[178] well be a recent development quite unconnected with the lack of weapons. McGee (1894: *loc. cit.*) casually mentions that the Seris hunt both cougars
[411] and the jaguars but cites no evidence for it. Yet
[177] in his time Seris' almost only weapons were the bow and arrow and a lance which today has been replaced by firearms. I am unable to explain this contradictory behaviour.

262 Finally, there is the Ringtail cat or cácomistle. Although this beast has been reported as part of the diet, the information isn't too reliable. I had
● [124] no way of checking whether this was the animal the Indians had in mind. Their description of it seemed to answer some other unspecified animal and their answers were confused. The fact is that the Ringtail cat does occur in the Seri territory and they are surely familiar with it.

Of the remaining 11 species none were ever mentioned by any of the informants as having been ever eaten. Their denial of eating the coyotes were most vehement. Coyote figures out probably

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231 which was kept around as a pet and it was interesting that the Indians who held it captive took considerable pains to look after it. This I noticed also with such few pet birds as they had. On the contrary, the large number of dogs which these Indians keep are left much to their own devices and are rarely fed. They are treated with lordly indifference and are treated as one Indian said to me "as you treat the dogs" which meant with a kick, stone and fist and forced to feed on the offal left on beaches. Yet, no Seri [273] would ever think of deliberately killing a dog, unless drunk. Although there is obviously little use for the dogs, each family keeps many of them. Sometimes as many as a dozen of these miserable curs live in the compound of one Serian family.

Taxonomy and Recognition

825 From the responses given, the Seri tend to split the mammals into two groups, the mammals proper and the group of animals which to them seem neither mammals nor fish. Evidently the possession of fur is of paramount importance here because it had been mentioned as a mammalian feature for several of the species. The Seri then put the *Cetacea* in a group of their own perhaps on these grounds. To be sure, the designation is somewhat hazy. The whale, the informants said, "is not fish nor mammal." The killer whale has also been referred to by them as a "whale-like animal." Finally, the dolphin one of the informants said was "like a shark. It lays eggs like a shark." But another informant thought it was "a mammal-like whale" although his response was obviously uncertain. That the presence of fur must be the main distinguishing feature is obvious in that they have no doubt about the mammalian position of the sea lion and that, while uncertain about the position of the bat, they are inclined to classify it with the mammals. As one informant put it "it can be of smilar kind to the coyote. It is not a bird because it has fur. Fur is not what the birds have."

Otherwise they are fairly good at the recognition of those individual species that are well known to them or that are frequently encountered in the area. The jaguar, called also *el tigre*, is known from hearsay only, owing to its extreme rarity in the immediate area of Desemboque. Porcupine is well recognized due to its peculiar features. But it must be rare and José Juan Moreno who saw it only once thought it was a "mammal." But he had no difficulty in recognizing a picture of it or associating the Spanish name *porcospino* with it. A somewhat moot point is the cácomistle. This animal evidently is not well known and, from the report, had been surely confused with some other creature. Finally, while the jaguarundi is surely found in the area it is also little known. Having to work with pictures I cannot in any way verify the Seri re- ●[124] sponses, especially since the picture used was not of the best kind for the identification purposes. A Mexican trader had a multilated skin of one, but he sold it to a visitor before I had time to query the informants about it.

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* 825 whale and the bat, both of which are said to be about more during the hot season. The killer whale, in fact, is supposed to be absent altogether during the cold season. On the other hand, the peccary and the bighorn are said to be more common during the cold season and the big sheep, the Indians say, "goes into the mountains of Eastern Sonora during the hot season."

For a few species, seasonal differences cannot be included in this type of analysis. The grey whale, the informants said, "comes here (to Desemboque) and Tiburon in May and disappears into the Gulf in late June." As for the porcupine, the sightings of these animals were few and the informants actually made a point of explaining that the beasts had been seen so few times that they couldn't tell in which season it is more common. José Juan Moreno summarized the situation best when he told me that "I have seen one two years ago near Kino in November. And before I saw it near Desemboque in March and before yet, a very long time ago near Tepopa in March."

So much for the gross seasonal occurances.

There are a few additional observations which indicate recognition of the seasonal differences in behaviour, although the observations here are sporadic and very few. Questioned about the time of the year when the mating of the mammals took [124] place, the overwhelming responses were "quien sabe?" In fact, only for two species, the sea lion and the deer, the Indians indicated this sort of information. Of the sea lion, the informants said "it gathers for mating in October. Everyone mates with everyone," but they gave no indication as to the time of birth of the young. More information they had about the deer where not only the mating season has been indicated but also a number of other phases of the life history of this ungulate, intimately connected with the season. Here they gave a whole sequence of events as follows: "Mating takes place in August. Young are born in May following this. In November the males fight. They (the males) drop horns in February or March, grow them in May."

The only other reference to the seasonality the informants gave was for the jackrabbit. Here, the young, they say, are born in May. Thus in the two only instances where the birth of the young has been indicated, this takes place during the summer. It is likely that if more information is available it'll tend in that direction.

It will be seen also that the two other species for which the Seri indicated a connection between the season and the life history were large species: the deer and the sea lion. It will also be seen that the animal about which they seem to know most is actually one that is perhaps of greatest economic importance and which is also common. Bighorn runs perhaps second in this respect, but it occurs only in certain limited areas and is far more elusive.

Finally, there is very little recognition of the seasonal changes in colorations in the mammals. In fact, not a single instance of such changes has been suggested to me. The replies varied from denials to the traditional "quien sabe?"

[P-14 B]

Bakalkin E-5 (1963-1965)1963 MU31 Seri MU31

#825 [177] the Mexican, since it includes such well known European beliefs as making deliberate efforts to get itself trapped in the hair and biting with the tongue. The younger ones discarded these ideas. But the residue of them or, at any rate, an afterfeeling remains. The bats are somehow regarded with disgust. It is this attitude which may well account for their denials that it lives in the human homes and it may represent a conscious or unconscious effort to cover up a disreputable fact (to them). There had been some other occasions where the informants denied, for example, eating certain animals or else the knowledge of certain matters which were both later exposed by the sequence of events.

● [124]

[P. 16 B]

9:Malkin E-5 (1953-1955)1962 NU31 Seri NU31

V

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

136 fore it was impossible to check the Seris' ability
* [825] to distinguish between these.

As for the marine turtles, there are several possible species in the area. There is no mistake about the loggerhead. I have seen one carapace and bones taken at Campo Vivora, while with the Seris. The others could be any two of the several species common in the Gulf.

Economic Uses

* 825 In 1956 I published data concerning economic
114 exploitation of the reptiles by the Seris which need correction. Eleven species out of 25 had been reported as used economically. Additional work done in 1955 and after the completion of the MS. indicated a much higher percentage: 17 species out of 26 are used. Thus the percentage increases from 44% to 65%. The percentage of the species actually used will probably rise with additional
[262] field work because some of the informants are dis-
inclined to admit eating certain animals or will
● [124] simply say, "these had been eaten in the past but not now." However, close inspection and observation often contradict these statements.

262 The list of species reported as eaten is as follows:

Turtles and tortoises: all species
Snakes: both racers, patch nosed snake and both rattlesnakes
Lizards: both chuckawallas, Gila monster, race runner, northern crested lizard

This listing shows how much dependent are the Seris on the desert habitat for food. Even today, with all the available ready-made manufactured
[178] food or imported food from the *tienda*, they gather evidently most of the common reptiles to increase their menu.

Of the species in the list, only two, both smaller species of sea turtles, figure as really important items. McGee believed that here was by far the most important part of the Seri menu, with the marine birds running second.* Now, the importance of the sea turtles has declined, no doubt through a variety of outside influences. I doubt (on the basis of my observation) if altogether it comes to more than 10% of their total diet. The turtles had been replaced as number one food by
[177] the fish (with the introduction of hook and line fishing). But anther factor evidently is the depletion of the turtle population. The third species, the huge loggerhead, is so rare that during the entire
[225] summer of 1953, only one of them had been harpooned and that at Camp Vivora away from Desemboque. The two smaller species have also become very rare and hardly ever show up near the village. They can be taken on more distant expedi-

*Eggs of the turtles are considered a delicacy, especially of the smaller of the two. The Seris say that the loggerhead has been eaten once but now almost never, because it became so rare.

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231 *oporus* or a *Cnemidophorus*, but even so, the life of the captive is short. Sooner or later it'll be slaughtered like any other beast played with by the Indian boy.

Taxonomy

* 825 In general the Seri recognize the major groupings of this class. Thus we have the lizards, snakes, turtles, sea turtles and toads. All these do correspond to the natural groupings with the sole exception of the horned toad. For some reason it is not classed together with the lizards but is supposed to be an entirely different animal. Some of the informants tend to keep the "vivoras," that is the rattlers, separate from the snakes but others think they are just a different kind of snake.

In distinguishing between one species and another, the Seris showed remarkable acuity. Out of 26 species listed here, they confused only two, both relatively small and similar looking Utas.[11] On the other hand, they were able to associate correctly specimens of the different sizes and often also colors of the same species. I frequently mixed up

● 124 large number of specimens without telling them
* 825 anything about them and yet invariably the informants were able to sort them out correctly.

It is also interesting that, when I showed to Barnett and Moreno a specimen of a small toad I brought along pickled from Needles, California, they both identified it with the *B. alvarious*, the local toad.

* 825 Moreno also told me that there are two species of *Dipsosaurus* on San Esteban and the one I had was the smaller of the two. I am unable to check this information and it may be that what he had in mind was the larger chuckawalla. I have obtained information about the chuckawalla from other informants but not from him. There are no larger lizards in the area other than the chuckawalla and the Gila monster; therefore this suspicion is justified.

Sexing

All reptiles or amphibians, according to the Seri, do have the male and the female sex and in most cases highly specific traits in the two sexes of the same species were indicated. Actually sex differentiating data had been obtained for 23 out of 26 species. The three species for which no data on this are available were spotted race runner, western diamondback and the red racer. For the first two it may be an oversight on my part in the course of questioning. As for the red racer, the answer simply was "I don't know" or "I can't tell." It is possible that other individuals could have provided a more specific answer.

In general a multitude of criteria to differentiate the sex in the animals were employed; size, color pattern, presence or absence of specific structures all were used either individually or together. For 16 species the informants indicated either differences in size or similarity in size;

[11]Gecko and *Xanthusia* go under identical Seri name, but, they say, they are different forms. However, they do separate the two racers, black and red variety, even if taxonomists today lump them as color forms of the same species.

11: Moser L-5 (1956-1961) 1963
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so named must be of the same sex as the first. The significance of land ownership needs further investigation.

Many of the Seri still prefer, when possible, to live in their chosen band area. Sometimes a person, when he is approaching death, will ask to be taken to his own *i?iziiting*, where he can die and be buried in the area of his choice.

NOTES

1. Due to printing limitations, stress on Seri words has been omitted, and several orthographic symbol changes have been made for this paper. The phonetic values of the symbols used are the following: *p* is voiceless labial stop; *t* is vl. dental stop; *k* is vl. velar stop; *?* is glottal stop; *f* is vl. labial flat spirant; *w* is vl. labial grooved-rounded spirant; *s* is vl. alveolar spirant; *x* is vl. alveo-palatal spirant; *l* is vl. lateral spirant; *h* is vl. velar spirant; *x* is vl. back velar spirant; *m* is labial nasal; *n* is dental nasal; *ng* is velar nasal; *y* is palatal semivowel; *i* is a high close front vowel; *e* is a low close front vowel; *a* is a low open central vowel; *o* is a mid close back vowel.

2. These data were compiled during field trips to the Seri camps during the years 1956-61, the studies being carried out under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. The principal informant was R. Herrera T. whose information was checked with and supplemented by nine of the older members of the tribe. I am indebted to my colleague, David Thomas, who read an earlier draft of this paper and made helpful suggestions.

3. 1) W. J. McGee, "The Seri Indians," *Bureau of American Ethnology, Annual Report*, No. 17, Part 1. Washington, 1898. 2) A. L. Kroeber, "The Seri," *Southwest Museum Papers*, No. 6. Los Angeles, 1931. 3) W. B. Griffen, "Notes on Seri Indian Culture, Sonora, Mexico," *Latin American Monograph Series*, No. 10, Gainesville, 1959.

4. It will be noted that between subdivision 3 and 4 on Fig. 3 there is an unnumbered area, the status of which is uncertain.

5. Kroeber states that McGee's concept of Seri maternal lineages crystallized into totemic clans with matron rule seem a fantasy. In Kroeber's opinion, "The Seri may never have had sibs or clans; but the fact that they appear to lack them now is no positive evidence that they were without them three centuries ago. Shifts of residence, contraction of territory, shrinkage of numbers, amalgamation of distinct bands, may well have obliterated much of such social fabric as they once possessed."

Griffen discusses the nature of the former Seri bands and states, "they may have been patrilineal and exogamous. The criteria . . . that Julian Steward has exposited for the formation of exogamous, patrilineal bands . . . are and presumably would have been met formerly in the Seri habitat." Griffen lists other aspects of this type of band which are also verified to some extent by his data. From reading his material, it is obvious that he suspects the existence of clans at some earlier period. He emphasizes the need for further investigation.

6. G. P. Murdock, *Social Structure*, Macmillan Co., New York, 1949.

7. Marriages were usually contracted within the band.

8. As Kroeber points out, their memory likely covers only the latter part of the period of Spanish contacts.

9. The Seri recall nothing of Seri-Pima contacts and little of Seri-Apache relations.

10. The story is related that one day some Seri entered a cave where they found several Papago jugs filled with seeds. Being hungry, the people ate the seeds and left some arrows as token payment. The Seri say that the Papago apparently believed the arrows were intended as an insult. Fighting broke out soon afterward.

11. The Seri concept of the band annihilations is seen to be in contradiction to McGee's statement (p. 132): "Concordantly with their primary characteristic, the Seri have avoided ethnic and demotic union beyond the narrow limits of their own kindred; and even of these they seem to have cast out parts, annihilating the Guayma and Upanguayma, displacing and nearly destroying the Tepoka, and outlawing individuals and (apparently) small groups."